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U.S. labels Zakharov a turncoat

By Bill Gertz
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Convicted Soviet spy Gennady Zakharov, who was released last month in a deal to obtain the freedom of Nicholas Daniloff, initially offered to become a double agent for the FBI, Reagan administration officials said.

Zakharov, after his arrest Aug. 23, also supplied FBI agents with the names of three Soviet intelligence officers, who were among 25 Soviet U.N. diplomats subsequently ordered by President Reagan to leave the United States, officials said.

One official, who declined to be named, said Zakharov "sang like a tweetie bird" in his confession. He admitted he was a Soviet KGB intelligence officer and offered to work for the FBI, the official said.

Zakharov, a former U.N. secretariat official, was charged with attempting to buy classified U.S. defense documents containing jet engine secrets for \$1,000 from an FBI informant.

He pleaded "no contest" Sept. 30 to the charges, was sentenced to five years' probation and allowed to leave the country later that day. His release was part of a deal that won freedom for Mr. Daniloff, a U.S. News & World Report correspondent who was arrested Aug. 30 in Moscow on charges of spying.

When Zakharov was in custody, the Justice Department and FBI rejected his offer to spy on behalf of the United States as a ploy to win freedom, the official said.

Zakharov's offer also was rejected because U.S. officials did not think he held a rank high enough to be a useful double agent, and they also suspected Zakharov would flee the country once he was released, the official said.

Justice Department spokesman John Russell declined to comment further on the Zakharov case, but said the administration official's account of the case was "accurate."

The three Soviet intelligence officers that Zakharov named while in custody included the New York station chiefs of the KGB and the GRU military intelligence service, the official said.

The three men and the 22 other Soviet diplomats, the last of whom left last week, all have been identified by U.S. officials as senior Soviet intelligence officers operating under U.N. cover.

The diplomats were ordered out of the country Sept. 17 in the first phase of a Reagan administration directive for the Soviets to reduce their three U.N. missions by 105 diplomats over the next two years.

"The minute the Soviets got the list, they knew he [Zakharov] sung," the official said. "They were always afraid that he would talk."

FBI intelligence director James H. Geer described Zakharov in a recent interview as a "very, very aggressive intelligence officer" whose job was recruiting students as long-term Soviet intelligence agents.

Zakharov's release followed U.S.-Soviet negotiations between Secretary of State George Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in New York for the release of Mr. Daniloff.

Mr. Daniloff, who was arrested in Moscow one week after Zakharov was arrested in New York, was

widely viewed as a hostage taken by the Soviets to win Zakharov's release.

Mr. Daniloff was allowed to leave the Soviet Union 24 hours before Zakharov was set free. U.S. officials denied the two men were traded.

Zakharov's arrest was set up by an FBI counterespionage operation lasting nearly four years, according to court papers.

The operation began when a U.S. resident alien from Guyana, at the time a Queens College student, was approached by Zakharov and asked to provide technical information from university libraries, the papers state.

The student immediately contacted the FBI and agreed to cooperate in the operation, the papers state and was later directed by Zakharov to take a job with a New York defense subcontractor that manufactured jet engine and high-technology defense components.

Zakharov claimed throughout the affair he was innocent. He told reporters as he departed the United States Sept. 30: "I am not a spy."

This article is based in part on wire service reports.